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No. 511

## WITHOUT AND WITHIN.

BY EBEN E. REXFORD.

Within is brightness. All the room  
Is full of faintly-sweet perfume,  
The merry music of the dance  
Wraps scene and sense in subtle trance,  
As up and down, in dizzy whirl,  
Swing fair-faced youth and happy girl.  
No hint of want or woe is there.  
No face shows trace of hopeless care,  
As jewels flash, but brighter far  
Shine eyes than any jewels are.  
So with gay music, laugh and song  
The feet-winged moments drift along.

Without, in darkness, and alone,  
With bare feet on the icy stone,  
While fierce and wild the north wind blows  
The frost-chill through her threadbare clothes,  
Through lace that hangs the windows wide  
Looks in a beggar, hollow-eyed.

Such hungry eyes as hers must touch  
The heart not hardened overmuch.  
Such wan, white lips, such tired feet,  
As standing in the dreary street,  
She watches youth's light-hearted tread  
And craves, poor soul! a crust of bread!

So goes the world. The poor must wait  
As beggars at the rich man's gate  
And see the happiness within—  
Oh, fate! not crueler is sin!  
From waste and plenty take and give  
The crust that helps the poor to live.

## Azhort, the Axman;

OR,

The Secrets of the Ducal Palace.  
A ROMANCE OF VENICE.

BY ANTHONY P. MORRIS.

AUTHOR OF "FRANZ, THE FRENCH DETECTIVE,"  
"THE MAN OF STEEL," ETC., ETC.

### CHAPTER III.

#### THE HEADSMAN'S FAMILY.

The home of Azhort, once chief executioner of Venice, was situated at the extreme north-west of that cluster of islands which, in late days, was known as the New Lazaretto.

A square, low, massive stone structure, gray with age, and with the usual—but in this instance most neglected—garden at the rear. It had changed owners repeatedly during and subsequent to that notorious muddle of kingdoms and republics known in history as the League of Cambray, and finally became the castle of one whose vicious and shuddering nature of calling filly sorted with a building gloomy, treacherous and scowling of aspect.

Though some miles distant from the scene of conflict on the Grand Canal, the gondola of Azhort soon arrived at the step-stones of what was known as the "Deathsman's Fort,"—for on the broad, square roof, or rampart, were several pieces of brass cannon that had been captured and placed there at a period of war with the French.

Piero, the pretending gondolier, was well acquainted with the destination, and plied his oar as stoutly as if earnest in the employ of the man whom he hated from the depths of his heart, and swore vengeance upon, for the possible death of Cladius Alburno.

It was fortunate for the intentions of Piero that the ex-chief of executioners had bestowed no special scrutiny upon his new servant—employed that very morn—and more fortunate that, as chance willed, Piero was, in his disguise, in close resemblance to that vagabond. Hence, having made the boat fast to the stairs before the dull-muzzled abode of Azhort, and having entered to the presence of the terrible man's family—Piero following by order—for it was mostly customary that a regularly employed gondolier became also the general servant—there ensued no discovery of the change in attendants which had occurred.

If the home of the deathsmen was darkly forbidding without, its interior was even more strikingly impressive.

Like his gondola, like his somber cape of velvet, the cap he wore, the scowl over his eagle-and-tiger eyes, everything was black, black as the shadow of the earth over an eclipsed moon. Furniture, balustrade, ceilings and walls, even the flooring of mosaicked flags, were glossed in darkness, until the beholder could imagine himself in a vast tomb of polished black agate, pervaded by airs of ghostly whispering.

Though wealthy enough to enjoy all comforts of room and convenience, Azhort had his peculiarities and seemed rather fond of confining himself to a single apartment on the lower floor, where he took meals with his family, but invariably slept alone. This apartment was but a few steps from the front entrance, decked profusely with armorial trappings, helmets and plates of knights long dead, and containing the great two-handed sword and broad-bladed ax, with which his relentless arm had dealt the death-blow for many victims supplied by the dread Council of Ten when he was in the zenith of his career as chief executioner.

Straight to this lower chamber he led the way—Piero boldly in the rear—and presently joined his family: wife and son.

The wife was tall, gaunt, yellow-skinned, having but one eye that was watery and leering; feature and person coarse and awkward; voice that rasped and gurgled in the throat of a long, craning neck; movements those of a woman more masculine of habit than female.

The son, like the father, was dwarfed and ugly, dressed in black, tight, spangled garments, and seated, with twisted legs, on a high stool of ebony stain. On his head he wore a flimsy conical cap. His nose was long and pointed; mouth broad and narrow, and capable of a dunce-like grin, which, at times, displayed the teeth of a squirrel. His eyes were small, dark and cunning, and in their slightly sunken depths there dwelt a something that warned of a passion not safe to be aroused.

The coffin-hued furnishings, the armorial display, the virago wife, the eely-dwarfed son, all were closely observed by Piero; and when at last he stood fairly within the headsmen's abode, he exclaimed, under his breath:

"By St. George! I have followed the lead of Satan. Here are his favorite imps. I am in a small kingdom of perdition. Poor chance would I have did they discover that not a simple gondolier but a lieutenant of the famous Cladius Alburno—whom the executioner hated enough to kill, or try to kill—has dared to enter the infernal home of Azhort, to spy and for vengeance. Fiends, all! they would flay me alive!"

The arrival of the lord of the household was



"Hi! Look here! a man in disguise. A spy! A spy! Aid me, father!"

hailed with a shout from the young dwarf upon the stool, and Bal-Balla, the wife, mumbled some brief words of recognition.

"Supper!" growled Azhort, sending his cap, with a twirl, across to the grasp of his grinning son.

"This ready long since. Any news from the Palazzo Ducale?" answered and asked Bal-Balla.

"Oh! Hi! we have a new man!" squeaked Tobato, the junior dwarf, who had immediately fixed his little eyes on Piero.

"I do not like the glance of that young rascal," passed in the mind of Piero. "It has not the fierceness of his father's, but it is even more prying and may discover that the beard and the wig I wear are false. To be known as a spy here would, undoubtedly, insure my death. Let me be ready." And he cautiously felt in his bosom to see if his stiletto was safely there.

"Let me know you, fine fellow," said the deformed youth, sliding from his stool and advancing like a spider over its silken web. "I am the son of Azhort. My name is Tobato—yours?"

"Piero, bless you, boy; a trusty gondolier, I hope."

"I think I like your looks—Piero—Piero," declared the dwarf, grinning more broadly, declaring his snake eyes first on the head, then on the body, then on the feet, and finally back to the face of Piero, as he repeated the name of that person twice and slowly. "Yes, you tickle my fancy. That great grizzly beard—I always liked big beards, though I cannot grow one myself. Hi! and hair of two colors—black and gray. How very odd! Look, mother: a man with hair of—"

"Cease your chatter, Tobato. Back to your seat—hear!—while I talk with your father. Sit you down in that corner, Rags." The last to Piero, and leveling a brown, brawny, hairy arm and claw-of-a-finger toward a distant part of the room.

Piero obeyed silently, keeping covert watch upon the grinning Tobato, whose eyes followed him intently, and whose supple coiled limbs cased in black reminded of some huge and poisonous spider, surmounted by the head of a clown and the expression of an imp, all ready to spring forward and bite, tear or devour.

A portion of the wig worn by Piero had slipped aside, betraying the true brown color of the hair beneath. By a dextrous movement he adjusted this as he sat down on the box indicated by Bal-Balla.

"When you ask for news," growled Azhort, using the Spanish language, and already munching hungrily at the bounty which Bal-Balla had spread before him—"when you ask for news, let me tell you that I have a plenty of it, which I only gathered this day"—chewing ravenously.

"Listen, and you shall hear."

"You always said that my ears were both big and ugly. Go on with the news you bring," returned Bal-Balla, shortly, standing before him with arms akimbo and staring at him with her watery but steady one eye.

"Hi!" thought Tobato, as he continued his keen survey of Piero. "Hi! that fellow's hair is now all of one color—gray. What has become of the black patch I saw a moment since? I no longer see it."

Piero transferred his attention to the fierce-looking couple at the table.

"Come, now," he muttered, though in a whisper smothered by his great beard, "there is to

be some news gossip. I would like to hear what manner of news this man of devil's shape is accustomed to bring his family. He speaks in Spanish, and has either forgotten that I am here, or imagines that a poor gondolier has never learned enough, but his own beloved dialect. Oh, but I am as good at Spanish, or Italian, or French, or Swiss."

"The Duke d'Ossuna does not want the crown of Naples," abruptly stated Azhort.

"Hoo! what mean you? Was it not for that the Council of Ten—as you and I know—was apprised of the intended revolt?"

"A trick. Bah! Nobles are full of tricks. You cannot swear, by their acts to-day, what they do on the morrow."

"True enough. What, then, is the duke after?"

"The duke, the marquis and the ambassador—D'Ossuna, De Bedmar and Pedro de Toledo—seek the overthrow of the Republic, and select a time when Venice is in almost open hostility to Spain. It is not the crown of Naples, but to commence with the pillage of Venice. So much for the sly duke."

"Hoo!" screamed Bal-Balla, excited on the instant. "Hoo! the pillage of Venice. That is it! Then fire!—sword!—riot! How gay! I am in! Let us have pillage! Viva! Good for the Duke d'Ossuna! Hoo!"

Bal-Balla rocked from foot to foot, swayed her body back and forth, waved her arms aloft and about, and tossed her head this way and that till its mass of coarse hair loosed and tangled over brow and shoulders, all the while shouting: "Hoo! Hoo!" in a burst of savage glee.

She uttered and shouted the words in the dialect of Venice, and her frenzied behavior and hints at its cause brought on contagion; for catching the spirit of his mother, and delighting in the prospect of fights and plunder, Tobato leaped from his stool and joined her, dancing, grating and contorting his spider shape, till he and the insane virago resembled a pair of hideous demons.

"Hi! Hi!" he yelled. "Oh, good! A riot! Burn and plunder! Hi! We'll drag out the nobles, the senators, and the dogs, and cut off their heads! Hi!" and while he sprang hither and thither, on his elastic toes, he clapped his hands and hallooed with the throat of a screech-owl.

Partaking of the excitement which his announcement created, Azhort bounded from the table to the wall and snatched down his broad-bladed and gleaming ax.

"Ay, pillage and fire!" he cried, hoarsely. "Let me try the weight of my pet ax. So! So! So! Light in darkness! my arm is young yet. So!—and so! Ha!" and round and round his wolfish head he circled the terrible ax like a ring of lightning flashes.

Bal-Balla worked her actions to a pitch of madness; Tobato hopped and skipped. And loud "Hoo! Hoo!" and shrill "Hi! Hi!" filled the chamber with a scene and sound of revelous insanity.

CHAPTER IV.  
THE TWO SPIES WORK.

The swift-circling ax, the shuddering glare in the eyes of the ex-chief of executioners and his demoniac countenance of passion; the wild cries and savage gestures of Bal-Balla and Tobato; the din of all the portraiture of natures

fiercely barbaric, was an exhibition that even the pseudo Piero—who had fought many times and bravely amid the terrors of a naval battle—felt a shiver in witnessing.

But for a timely dodge on Piero's part, the first strong sweep of the mighty ax would have completely severed his head; for Azhort, in his impulse of mad enthusiasm, seemed to forget the presence of his gondolier, and his position was near the box, within striking distance of that quite astonished person.

"Hoo!" ejaculated Piero, as he rolled none too quick from the box and crouched upon the floor. "Now may the winged lion fly away with me from this den! An instant later, and my head would have been rolling under yonder table. Look at them! All mad! All devils! Were I ten times a giant, with the hide of a rhinoceros, I know that I never would leave this house alive did they discover me to be the lieutenant of famous Cladius Alburno."

"Dance, Tobato! Hoo! dance for joy!" screeched the hag.

"Hi! Hi!" squealed Tobato, louder than ever. The miniature pandemonium was only of a few seconds' duration.

"Silence, all!" snarled the hoarse voice of the deathsmen, abruptly slapping back the ax upon its brackets.

Instantly there was quietness. Tobato clambered again upon his high stool, and perceiving Piero kneeling and crouching, he giggled in amusement. Bal-Balla set about rearranging her hair and garments, disheveled and disordered during the brief and vociferous orgie.

"Silence, all. I have more news to give you. This pillage and riot in prospect is to occur to-morrow night—"

"The sooner the better," put in Bal-Balla.

"Hi! To-morrow night. Good," supplemented Tobato.

"All Spaniards employed by nobles—and there are many—will attend to those nobles, saving all they can for the ax of Azhort and massacring all who cannot be saved. Hoo! I am of the duke's party. Think of it: I will once again be chief executioner of Venice! though I desire it but for one day."

"Hoo! That is excellent! You will be chief!" applauded Bal-Balla.

"Hi! Hi! My father will be chief, and I shall have work in the strangling-chamber! Oil the bowstring! Sharpen sword and ax! Cheer for the Duke d'Ossuna! Hi!" and the impish dwarf swung his black-lighted legs and long, slim arms, laughing loudly, and mother and son were on the verge of another frenzy; but Azhort sternly cried:

"Fence! Bolts and lightning! will you be still! Before this happens, remember that I must get into the Trienti palace, and see if I have not guessed aright the secret Lady Perci has held there for twelve years. 'Twas she who deprived you of your eye, Bal-Balla; she was fiery-tempered and scheming enough, eighteen years ago—to rush upon the deck and jab a lance-point at the first thing she saw; that chancing to be your eye; and she is cunning enough to contrive and carry out what I think she has for twelve years past. Vengeance for you and riches for me will ensue when I have laid bare the secret—a double secret—which must be accomplished before to-morrow night. Ha! fellow, do you understand what I am saying?" to Piero, whose presence he suddenly recalled.

Azhort was still using the language of Spain.

Piero only stared and gaped, as if in dread of the man-fiend, and asked, tremblingly:

"What is your wish, signore?"

"Out! He is too much of an idiot to understand," avowed Bal-Balla, confidently, turning her leering one eye for a second on the dissembling Piero.

"Hi! they think him an idiot," chuckled Tobato, sotto voce; "but I know better. He is a man in disguise, with hair of two colors; and I begin to suspicion that the beard he wears is not on its rightful owner's face. Why is he masquerading here? I am watching him."

And Tobato was watching the supposed gondolier with the unwinking keenness of a rat that hides and waits for a chance to dart.

"But how to enter Trienti palace?" was the query of Bal-Balla, "when for nearly the whole of those twelve years you have been striving vainly, and by every artifice, to gain admittance. Hoo! Marco Trienti is anything else than a friend of yours. And you have never told me what secret of hate lies between you."

"None," hissed Azhort, in a tone of anger, and scowling till his brows twisted in black knots over his hawkish nose. "None, except that he despises bloodshed, and those who dabble in it, otherwise than in open warfare. But, despite the order of Marco Trienti, to the contrary, I shall enter the palace this very night. There is a purse of gold"—tossing onto the table the purse he had received in part payment from Lady Perci.

"Hoo! a purse of gold!" echoed the hag.

"Hi! gold! gold!" rejoined the dwarf imp.

Mother and son sprung greedily at the purse, tearing it apart and scattering its contents over the table top.

"That in part for having stabbed and drowned Cladius Alburno in the Grand Canal. I cannot be sure that I stabbed him, for, strangely, there is no blood on my knife. But he is drowned, to a certainty."

"So, I had forgotten," entered Piero's mind. "My beloved commander Captain Cladius, this very day put on a jacket of mail in fear of a knife-thrust from the skulking spire of The Ten. As he is a very good swimmer, he may be still alive to have his own vengeance on this man with a wolf's head."

"And," continued Azhort, "I am to get another purse at the palace, in completion of the bargain with Lady Perci, for it was to oblige her I did the deed. Have no doubt as to my being admitted. Look: this is the signet ring of Lady Perci Trienti. None dare dispute it!" and he held aloft the stolen ring that shone, in the light of the many candles that illuminated the room, like a sparkling star.

"The signet ring of Lady Perci!" exclaimed the two. And Bal-Balla: "I will not waste time to ask how you came by it, but—hoo!—by the power of that ring, then, you can find Venturi Adello, and from Venturi Adello you can learn where to seek for the chest of treasure we could not capture at a time when you and I bore other names, and in that fight on board the *Unita*, when Lady Perci spared my eye out. Hoo! Good! The treasure of Venturi Adello, first; then the head of Lady Perci!"

"What can they mean?" wondered the attentive Piero. "They speak of finding Venturi Adello, who, I have heard, was knocked overboard and drowned in the Adriatic, during a terrific battle against Sadra, the half-Moor pirate, eighteen years ago. His dead body they must speak of. Come, how can the dead body



—if it has been found—have anything to do with the discovery of a treasure? These beasts are mysterious as well as devilish." These words were uttered by a man of a goodly countenance, a good day's work for his smart father! crowed Tobato, sitting again to his high stool, after having pocketed a goodly share of the coin from the purse.

"Hark ye," said Azhort, with a serious frown: "if Venturi Adello will deal with me, I will free him. We will share the treasure together. There are millions in precious stones for both. Ho! then for the pillage of Venice, and after the pillage, the sea—the wide, free sea! The ship, the breeze, my hundred good men of Barbary, and Sadrae once more on the pirate's deck! Ha! ha! ha!"

"Ho! And I—the Fazienta of old—with cutlass in hand will be brave at your side!" "Hi! yes, the sea. A very good pirate I think I shall make," chimed in Tobato. "But I must have a bride. Give me Adria Trienti for my bride and queen, for I have long loved her!"

Tobato had no recollection of being on the sea; he was too young at a time when his parents lived entirely upon it and piled a nefarious trade, as will be developed duly.

"Very true," agreed the headman, eying his son with fierce pride. "It is a famous idea. Out of the pillage and massacre, I must try and save the pretty Adria to become the wife of my boy."

"Now, by the Pope's toe!" was the inward utterance of Piero. "What manner of riddle am I getting in here? With half a brain I might judge that the notorious and outrageous Sadrae, the half-Moor pirate, and his wife, Fazienta, are before me in disguise. But Sadrae and his wife—who was accustomed to sit side by side with her husband—were both reported killed. I know, shortly after that very fight in which Venturi Adello, father of Adria Adello, was drowned. It cannot be possible that either Venturi Adello, or Sadrae, or Sadrae's wife, are alive to-day. All have been lost sight of for too long. Yet they speak as if they were, and hope to be pirates; and that young imp dares to think of abducting the beautiful Adria. Dog! How I should enjoy choking him to death!"

"Come, fellow, you shall take me first to the Trienti palace and return here for your supper. Come again to the palace when the iron hammer of Torre dell'Orologio strikes twelve. Your name!—I had forgotten to ask you when I engaged you"—to Piero, as he replaced on his shoulders the rich black cape of velvet.

"Piero, your name, signore," replied that person, humbly making ready to depart.

Tobato was acting strangely and excitedly. The family trio had a system of chiology comprehensive only to themselves, and in that language the younger dwarf was striving to communicate something to his thought. But he was busy with the dishes at the table and Azhort was adjusting his cap. Neither observed the motions of their son.

"Follow," commanded Azhort, striding from the apartment.

Piero kept close in the rear, and close and unnoticed by Piero noiselessly tiptoed and squirmed Tobato.

As the ex-chief of executioners laid his hand upon the outer door suddenly and swung it open with a jerk, a man, who had been eavesdropping, nearly fell headlong inward.

"Guns and death! What is this?" he cried, bounding forward to grasp the spy.

But in the same instant Tobato sprang upon the back of Piero, tearing off the hat, wig and whiskers of the latter, and uttering a shrill yelp.

"Hi! Look here! a man in disguise. A spy! A spy! Aid me, father!"

Piero twisted his assailant around and tripped him on the stones. Then, with a single leap, he dived forward into the water and vanished.

Startled by the outcry of his son, and while hesitating for a single instant, the first spy eluded Azhort, jumped into a two-prowed skiff and propelled himself like an arrow out upon the waters.

"Take the oar, Tobato! Haste! Two spies! What if all I have said has been understood by the spy inside and the spy outside! Fury of ear!" Worked about. If we can find the first, we may easily crack his skull as he swims. Haste!"

The listener at the outer door was the same vagabond who had, a short time previous, impounded Adria Adello at the wharf on the Grand Canal to purchase his miserable-looking dog.

As the black gondola moved about over the now moonlighted waters, in search of Piero, the dull boom of a distant gun came to the ears of father and son.

"Ha! the voice of a *bombarda*," exclaimed Azhort. "I judge it comes from the fortress at Porto di Lido. No matter; it does not concern me. And since we cannot find that spy—death seize him!—why, on, on to the Trienti palace!"

But that dull boom of the gun from Porto di Lido was of very great interest to Azhort, as subsequent events proved.

## CHAPTER V.

## A STARTLING ANNOUNCEMENT.

THOUGH well beyond all danger from that collision on the Grand Canal consummated through the inhuman connivance of Lady Perci, this gondola containing Adria continued with unflinching speed toward the curve, where, after running westward, the waters turn to an eastern course, the spot of the disaster happened about that vicinity.

Feeling, by intuition, that a sudden and plotted yelp betrayed the man of her heart's adoration, her anxious face peered between the curtains, and straining eyes, sparkling with love and fear, were riveted upon the gondola of Cladius.

Behind and above her shoulders was another face, that of a faithful attendant, apparently of Italian extraction, frank of countenance and of muscular build. She had, as it were, reared and watched over Adria since the marriage of Lady Perci with Marco Trienti, twelve years previous.

Cladius, when covered with badges of fame, had twice visited the Trienti palace. Once—the first time—had sufficed to seal the destiny of two hearts upon the chance of happiness or misery enduring; for at the first moment of the meeting of their eyes, gaze to gaze, Cladius had said to himself:

"Here is my fate. Heaven has brought us together!"

And Adria:

"This man is to be my king. I know not why, but already I love him."

Knowing Cladius Alborno to be an honorable man and a famous commander in the navy, and attracted, herself, by his noble bearing, the Indian woman, Phla, had encouraged her young mistress in the amour this singularly begun for the two responsive hearts were not long in communicating their pure, passionate affection.

It was much owing to the artifice of Phla, who was a shrewd as well as devoted woman, that the clandestine meetings of the lovers were obtained, after the success of the vile plot conceived by Lady Perci, owing to which Cladius was proclaimed a traitor and outlaw by the Ten and sought for with bloodthirsty zeal by the spies of that silent, though stealthy and terrible Council.

Hence, Phla, with great interest, though not so deep nor as keen as Adria's, watched in suspense what she readily perceived—what both felt assured—was a premeditated assault upon Cladius Alborno.

"Oh, Phla! what can it mean? Know you that black gondola with a prow like flashing steel? I have often seen the same before now. See! It is almost on the other, which has scarce time to turn and meet bow to bow. Do you mark?"

"Ay, right well, Lady Adria. Do I know it; and the bow is indeed steel, sharp steel, sharp as a knife. It is the gondola of that most hor-

rible of men, Azhort, once chief executioner of Venice."

"Ah! that man of blood. Look, Phla!—look! They meet! They strike! They crash! Oh, Heaven have mercy! Cladius! Cladius!"

For just then the two boats collided, and Adria saw the angry leap of her lover, his brief struggle with a demon shape, the two furious strokes dealt with a blade that gleamed brightly in the setting sun—then Cladius fell and sunk from sight.

A shriek as agonizing as if the knife of Azhort had sheathed itself in her own bosom broke from her lips, and, with the shriek, and face whiter than the terraced landings around her, she drooped backward, insensible, into the quick arms of Phla.

"There, there, my poor lady!" moaned the woman, still in a shudder, herself, at what she had witnessed, and striving to restore Adria to consciousness. "Ah, me! what a death for so noble a warrior as Cladius Alborno. To die by the dagger of an assassin—and such an assassin! There, there, my dear, good babe, my Lady Adria, open your eyes to me, dear sweet. Look up. Well, it may not be that he is dead, after all."

"Cladius! Cladius!" murmured the now half-unconscious maiden.

"But he may not be dead. Nay, have hope. Straight to the palace and make all haste," she cried, to the gondolier.

When Adria regained her senses, it was not to wonder what had happened; everything had been too vividly imprinted on her mind to render question necessary. She lay in a swoon, less dizzied and ached and found vent in weeping such only as flows from a wounded heart as it withers in the first great throes of insupportable grief.

"There, there, my dear lady," consoled Phla, caressing the sobbing form that lay in her strong and affectionate arms. "Do not yet grieve for what may appear to be the death of the right noble man who was your worthy lover. I cannot think that a just Heaven would permit such as he to perish so miserably. Cheer, my dear lady. Here hope."

"Oh, Phla! would that it had been me instead! I would gladly have given my own life for Cladius!" gasped the lips that were buried and sobbing on Phla's shoulder.

"Well enough, my dear lady, but, wait. Wait. If dead, his body will surely be found when it is noised publicly that the traitor, Cladius, was stabbed and drowned in the Grand Canal by Azhort, ex-chief of executioners of Venice. Wait, then, until we hear such rumor. Be guided by your ever-faithful Phla. Take respite. Compose yourself. I beg, dear lady, until we reach the palace."

"Arriving at the palace, Phla hurried her young mistress to her private apartments. She herself, acting like one in a labyrinth who walks mechanically, tired and hopeless, with little reck of whether the end may be.

Alone together Phla evinced most serious concern for her mistress's charges.

"Some refreshment immediately for my dear lady. You are weak. Eat something. Let me change your attire."—It was anything to divert the thoughts of Adria. "Ah, me! those cheeks, that always blushed red and rich as the roses of the garden, need a little—just a little—touch of rouge. Not! Well, then, eat, my dear lady. Here is sparkling wine and ripe, sweet fruit and other tempting things. A taste, a bite, a sip—it will stir the blood."

But Adria, leaning on the repast aside and sat, with clasped hands, a very picture of despair, dreaming—a frightful dream—of that glistering blade in a demon hand which had stricken Cladius Alborno.

Phla contemplated her sorrowfully, at a loss how to act.

"Ah! my poor babe, my poor Lady Adria," she murmured, her honest eyes filling with tears. "May all the evil spirits under the earth wreak vengeance forth on the ugly wretch who has given me this distressing story, covering my face. Yes, a fright—only a fright, for I do not yet believe that noble Cladius Alborno can have died by the hand of that assassin."

Here there was a summons at the entrance, and Phla, answering it, returned to say:

"Marco Trienti, your step-father, wishes to see you, Lady Adria. Come, let me arrange your toilet before a meeting with him."

"Be expeditious, Phla, for I am anxious to be with him. Think a step-father, he has ever been a father to me, and my love has gone out to him as a daughter's."

"Marco Trienti is a good man, heart and deed," observed Phla, busying herself with the toilet. "Would that I could think the same of his wife."

"Hush, Phla. Remember—she is my mother."

"And," was the woman's mental comment, "a very unmotherly mother. I vow, if she is your mother, which I have doubted for some years," but she kept this thought behind her lips.

The toilet completed, they descended the broad staircase together. Phla had many privileges, owing to her long and faithful service, and in her hand she carried a small, tidy costume had nearly always remained close to her young mistress, even when the large saloons and corridors were wont to blaze and swim with the light and dazzle of gay entertainments or masquerade, for which the Trienti palace was noted.

Half-way down they met a page ascending.

"Can you tell me whether Lady Perci has returned?" he inquired.

"As well ask me how long since Lady Perci left the palace," was the reply, in a satisfactory response of the Indian woman. "I am not the keeper of Lady Perci, boy, but the willing slave of Lady Adria."

"Phla, do not be rude," admonished Adria, gently; and she asked, scarce able to account for her impulses: "Tell me, Marco, who has come?"

"Azhort, the ex-chief of executioners. He desires an interview with Lady Perci, and cannot be refused because he wears her signet-ring."

At the first announcement, Adria tottered and grasped the balustrade for support, while her large, wondrous, startled eyes followed the page as he continued to ascend the staircase after answering her question.

"Azhort, the headman! He is in the palace!" she gasped. "No!—no! it is scarce possible. What could bring him here, and with the signet-ring of my mother? The murderer of my—Come, Phla! Oh, haste! I shall not feel safe until I am with Marco Trienti, my father."

"Push life away suddenly to possess, the maiden, making her fleet of foot, and for the moment flushing cheek and brow. Together they hastened to the apartment where the senator awaited the coming of his step-child; and as they entered his presence, Phla cried out in a spirit of alarm:

"Hear, Marco Trienti! The horrible man, Azhort, ex-headman of Venice, is in the palace, when it is well known that you have forbidden his entrance. He is at this moment awaiting an audience with Lady Perci!"

(To be continued—commenced in No. 510.)

MAKE home attractive. The children have no other rights to amusement as well as instruction. They should be entertained at home. Let there be a generous provision for the physical, mental and moral development of the young at home. There must be a place to play, as well as a place to pray. The children must have fun as well as instruction. To omit either is to do violence to their best interests. If parents would but consider their duty toward their own children, and study ways and means to make them happy at home, by innocent sports, proper instruction, above all, by free companionship and confidence, the church would be honored. Let fathers and mothers think on these things.

## A HEART CRY.

BY MARY DE WITT.

Tired of living, weary of woe,  
Tired, as tired, oh, no one can know  
How weary I am of this world and its show!  
Brimful of wickedness, sin and pain,  
It palliates on the heart and drowns the brain;  
Far more of suffering than joy we know:  
Tired of living, weary of woe.

Tired of living, weary of woe,  
Sunshine falls o'er us ne'er as we go  
Through this world's wilderness and fro.  
Hopeless before us just out of sight  
Leaving no radiance to brighten our night,  
Life is a burden that weighs us so;  
Tired of living, weary of woe.

Tired of living, weary of woe,  
Merciful God, show pity, oh, show,  
That our pathway may brighter and clearer  
grow.  
Groping in darkness, oh, Father of Grace,  
Dispel it, I pray, with the light of Thy face!  
Sin hovers over us, dark shadows grow;  
Tired of living, weary of woe.

## Mill, Mine, and Master.

BY JENNIE DAVIS BURTON.

MISS DARLEY'S pulses beat quicker for the savage wildness of the scene she stood regarding. The red light of the furnace fires streaming out into the black night, the workmen casting grotesque shadows as they stooped at their tasks, the glowing lakes and streams of white-hot metal in the process of "tapping off," and the square face and heavy brows of one man who sat at the controls of the machinery, all these things had a strange, morbid fascination for her.

"March, let your helper relieve you. Ladies, this is the best workman in the whole range of mills. He had some idea of lifting himself above this sphere at one time; but there's a sort of magnetism about the business, it would seem, that drew him back again. Tell them how it is, March."

"There's more heart in the iron than there is in some men," said March, "and that is the whole story, except that I grew up in the mills and don't find myself at home in the world outside them."

Something thrilled Madeline Darley as he spoke, an unmistakable memory of that firm, rather moody face under circumstances very different from his present surroundings. She was a woman of a certain kind, a woman of stout boots next day, when she dropped her stick and a bunch of maiden-hair ferns she had dug up, and found herself blushing under the eyes of Royal March.

He had a specimen of one in his hands, and had evidently been prospecting for authority, for he gave her the impatient glance one bestows upon an intruder, then lifted his hat in gentlemanly recognition and stood aside to let her pass. But Miss Darley put out both hands, with a mischievous laugh at his bewilderment.

"I have a notion to leave you completely puzzled, though I knew you after my first glance last night. Suppose I say thank you for an old service, and—if I may—sorry your invention did not succeed. I remember I warned you."

With her words the light of memory broke slowly over him, presenting a night scene in a railway carriage, with himself, a slim young fellow, saving a slight younger girl from the operations of a slowly-dressing woman, who had been for a moment, what better impulse was the sleeping girl's face, and was relieving her of her jewelry when detected in the act. With consciousness restored, the girl overflowed with gratitude, and the two young people grew congenial, the remembrance of that night journey, and parted with the feeling of regret which is natural to the circumstances, never expecting to meet again. But with seven years between that time and this they were face to face.

"How do you trust your venture was a more successful one," said March, answering her allusion to that time and warning, as what man would not under her gracious smile. "You were going to win the favor of a relation who was to make you his heiress, if I remember aright."

Miss Darley's countenance fell.

"But I failed, too," she answered, frankly. "And I find it hard to forgive myself, because a mean and hypocritical person gained by treachery what I ought to have had by right."

Why a chord of sympathy should stir in March's breast, he best knew, but the two found their old interest in each other awake and intensified, and it was due to Madeline's imperious demand that they should be invited to the next dinner-party given by the table, at the next dinner-party given by the table.

"I want to see how he looks in a drawing-room," said she, and she looked very well as Paul Ruble himself was forced to acknowledge, with no pleasant thoughts.

Two weeks more, and Madeline Darley woke to a sense of the danger into which she had drifted, and the waking came in the shape of the following letter:

"My Dear Madeline: If you are doing no better at getting into Mr. Ruble's good graces than you managed with aunt Muriel—though I must say I think she was most shrewd, after raising our expectations of you, I am sorry to hear that you have failed. I have not been in them boarding-schools where silly chits get such proud notions in their heads as to get high and mighty over their own little skin, as I have told you is ungrateful and what I never expected to see from my own child and more than all poor Darley's daughter, though if it had been one of Smith's it wouldn't have surprised me, for the man is more contrary every day of his life. Which brings me back to say that the girl has gone away after her last tantrum, and you're not going to get married, after all, you'd better come home and take up some of the work, for with the six children and three boarders I can't get along. Your affectionate mother, HENRIETTA SERRA."

The missive dropped into Miss Darley's lap. The vision of home it conjured gave her a repulsive cold—home in a city tenement with her violent-tempered step-father, presiding, her mother, a good-looking, but a good-looking woman, who might once have possessed long since worn out, leaving only a sour, shrewish woman, the children, so many young imps of mischief without any of the loveliness of childhood about them—what wonder that Madeline shuddered at the prospect and turned eagerly to any other that offered a release! Royal March's strong face might haunt her secret thoughts, her conscience might upbraid her for some of those bright mornings upon the mountain when their paths had crossed not wholly by accident, but within three days she was Paul Ruble's promised wife.

Mr. Ruble was coming out of the library with a queer, twisted key on his finger, when Miss Darley's face looking at him over the shoulder of a marble Venus caused him to start and drop it.

"Is it the key of Bluebeard's chamber, that you are so particular?" she asked, coming forth.

"Or has it the property of vanishing through the floor in a mysterious way?"

"No, my dear, I think I saw it last night, nervously. Never mind. What were you thinking of as you stood there, riveted by Venus's charms?"

"I was wondering how I would feel if I were mistress here by my own right instead of, your key," she answered, coolly. "I have a fancy I ought to have been."

His fiancée's abruptness must have grated upon Mr. Ruble's nerves. He changed color, bit his lip, and walked away. Miss Darley stooped when he disappeared and picked up the key, which had been snugly reposing beneath the sole of her slipper, and though a housemaid came upon the scene and searched diligently for the missing instrument, her inclinations did not prompt her to give up her discovery. There was a memory connected with that curious bit of twisted metal, which Madeline Darley pondered over for the hundredth time, perhaps, that day.

Old aunt Muriel—dead and gone now, so peace to her ashes!—had held it in her hand when she broke out in that denunciation of Paul Ruble, who had gained such an influence over her in her declining age that the poor lady had become little better than the creature of his will.

He is an evil man, Madeline, a hypocrite and a traitor. You were right in disliking him, and I have been a blind old fool. But we will have justice done yet. The will goes into the fire for one thing, my dear, and we make another one putting you in the place where he never would have been but for his base and unwarranted pretensions—never, believe me!"

But after all aunt Muriel had died and Paul Ruble came into possession of the controlling interest she had held in mills and mines, and Madeline hung the distorted key upon her watch-chain as she thought with a sigh of how differently her life might have turned had her relative's intention only been carried out. Whatever impulse made her take possession of the key, she had no thought of using it to discover her intended husband's secrets. Her opinion of the man was so far from flattering that the less of these which came to her knowledge the better, she thought.

Meanwhile Mr. Ruble was not a little nettled at this. He rode away in the afternoon to one of the coal mines from which mutters of discontent had been making themselves heard. A knot of miners were gathered on the hillside awaiting his approach.

"What now, you rascals!" he asked, angrily. "Why are you not at work?"

A decent-looking man took off his hat as he made answer for the party.

"We was a-comin' to tell you, sir, as how we'd put in our last strokes. 'Taint no ways as if we had a furze watch upon his pillars cut out till there's no more'n a few inches of crumbly 'slate 'twixt us'n bein' crushed to a jelly, and we've got our love of life strong as other men. We'll go to work elsewhere if it's your pleasure, sir, but not in the old mine where it's tempting Providence every minute we stay."

"You're a pack of contrary idiots and I'll have no more to do with you," was Mr. Ruble's gracious response as he pursued his way.

If the miners had combined to aggravate him, they could have taken no surer means than by sending Royal March to confront him near the mouth of the mine.

"The men were quite justified in leaving," said the latter.

"I will be the judge as to that," retorted Ruble. "As for you, sirrah, confine yourself to your own place after this, or I'll send you adrift as surely as I do those insubordinate hounds."

The blue pallor of quivering wrath was in Ruble's face as he saw the other's brows suit and darken. "What do I mean? I mean that your intolerable presumption, and your chance meetings with Miss Darley are both at an end. The lady has given her future into my keeping, and if her own pride doesn't check her associations, my will shall kindly enough disposed toward you, my man, in your own sphere, but it will be well for you to bear in mind that I am master."

Hesarcely looked it for all his bullying assertion. His handshook as he got out of his pocket a watch and a key, and he kept a furtive watch upon his companion, more than half-expecting some savage uprising of a spirit he had reason to dread. The brawny hand of the workman clenched until the muscles stood out in great cords on its back, and he turned away as if fearing to trust himself to any reply. But as he reached the descent he faced around.

"I wonder that Heaven doesn't send in that tottering roof on your head," he muttered, as if invoking such an end. A moment more and a dull rumble shook the earth. The sound like journey, and parted with the feeling of regret which is natural to the circumstances, never expecting to meet again. But with seven years between that time and this they were face to face.

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"You're a pack of contrary idiots and I'll have no



"Is he present this evening? I was led to understand that he was a guest of Mr. Wetherby," said Harry, unmoved by the other's pleasantry.

"Oh, but, ye know it wouldn't be good for 'm to appear in society on the same day after sending a fellow to the Kingdom of Heaven—or the other place?"

And this lesson in social etiquette was given with a patronizing air that was most exasperating.

"Thank you!" said Harry, so gravely that his irony was not perceived.

"Oh, not all!" Rubio played the devil and all with the fair creatures before. After this he'll distance everything on the course."

"No doubt!"

And with set teeth Harry bowed, and passed on.

But while his fury was at its height she met him, and her smile calmed the tempest.

Without rudeness he could not avoid asking her to join in the dance that was just forming. She had courted the invitation, by that subtle contrivance by which a lady may compass her own wishes, and her smile showed her gratification as she accepted it.

After the dance they went out on the cool veranda; and he was once more completely under her spell.

"I am disappointed that you have failed to meet my cousin Inez," she said, after a time. "I have been to see if she could not come down; but she is suffering from a raging headache. I know you will be pleased with her; and I hope soon to present you."

The name of Inez brought up a train of bitter thoughts in the mind of our hero. He determined by one desperate effort to break the spell which this woman wove about him.

"Miss Careno," he said, "I regret that I must leave you. My dearest friend is now perhaps dying, if not already dead, stricken down by the hand of Don Manuel Rubio. I came here to-night with the intent to meet him, force another duel upon him, and kill him! As he is not here, I must seek him elsewhere."

At this the girl turned pale with horror.

"Oh, Mr. Hazeltine!" she cried, "you cannot—you must not do so terrible a thing!"

"I can, and will!" he replied, with dogged determination.

But, forgetful of all conventionalities, she caught his hands and detained him, as he was about to leave her. Then with rapid, eloquent words she denounced dueling as murder.

By his own confession he was seeking the life of a fellow mortal from a spirit of revenge. Did it lessen the crime to add suicide to murder? since he had no right to jeopardize his own life in vain. And what palliation was the fact that human law affixed no penalty, when God's law was so plain?

He was a Northern man, and all the weight of his early education lay with her line of argument. Indeed, the project had been born of the spirit of recklessness that possessed him. He sought some desperate excitement to divert him from the fierce struggle that was going on in his breast.

She appealed to him in the name of his mother—of his sister. If he had any. She told him that Don Manuel was the lover of her cousin, Inez—this cousin who was more than a sister to her. Was he willing to break the heart of one so dear to her?

Lastly, she presented the danger to himself. And here her voice broke down, tears sprang to her eyes, and clinging to his hands, she begged him to promise that he would desist from his purpose.

In this crisis she who was the personification of modesty forgot maidenly reserve. The trammels of society fell away. That she had known him to break his hands, she begged him to promise that he would desist from his purpose.

Great emotions transcend the rules applicable to the ordinary events of life. Noble natures then soar free. This woman lost nothing of her dignity in being true to the inspiration that was given her.

Harry was thrilled by the magnetism of this direct appeal. He was bewildered by a strange intoxication. How, he scarcely knew; but he gave the promise, and got away from her and out of the house.

Out in the darkness he found himself walking with hurried strides; and there were tears on his cheeks.

He dashed them away, and with set teeth reached his apartments.

Passing Vikir without a glance, he swept aside the curtain and seized the handle of the door. It resisted his fierce wrench. It was locked.

The West Indian braced himself for the crisis that was at hand. His dark skin became a sallow yellow with pallor. He was resolved to defend his master against himself, with his life, if need be.

Then the storm burst!

## CHAPTER XXIII.

## A LOATHSOME FATE.

WHEN Donna Inez retired from the parlors, after seeing her husband enter, she was a prey to fierce alternations of defiance and despair, pacing her room like a caged tigress, now wringing her hands, now clenching them—at one moment feeling as if she had the strength and courage to cope with him in a physical encounter, at the next prostrated by weakness and fear.

Before retiring to rest Paola entered her cousin's room, and found her already in bed, the tumbled drapery attesting her restlessness.

After gymnastic inquiry about Inez's indisposition, the girl expressed her regrets that it had prevented her cousin from meeting Mr. Hazeltine, but added the painful hostility of the latter toward Don Manuel, from which, however, she had dissuaded him.

To this recital she listened, lying with her face in shadow. Whatever may have been her emotions, she held them well under control. When it was done, she asked, pointedly:

"How came he to tell you this? Men do not usually babble such matters to women whom they have known scarcely an hour."

"I don't know," she said. "It was a sort of apology for taking his departure so early."

Donna Inez thought rapidly. Here was a new crisis. Why had he told this to Paola, and by what power had she dissuaded him?

Inez knew Harry's truthfulness. Having promised Paola, he would keep his word. Could it be true that he sought Don Manuel only to avenge his friend, not knowing that he had other cause for enmity? Then he could not have recognized him.

But might not his failure to recognize Don Manuel imply that he was ignorant of her identity also? Asa Dillingham had suggested this possibility.

Lastly, if he supposed her dead, and himself thus free, what was the significance of Paola's influence over him? For no one knew better than Inez the devoted friendship existing between Harry and Ned Taunton. Could he be in love with Paola already?

In any event, this much was certain—the acquaintance with Mr. Hazeltine must go no further.

"Paola," said her cousin, "I know nothing of the excellencies of this gentleman; but his hostility toward Don Manuel must of course be an effectual barrier between him and me; and I think I know your heart well enough to feel confident that you cannot remain unperturbed."

"But, Inez, he has given up his enmity," urged Paola.

"Of course you are at liberty to do as you please," said Inez, coldly; "but I can never under any circumstances consent to meet him."

The gentle Paola was chilled, and with a depressed heart she sought her own room.

That night was to Donna Inez a night of torment. If Harry loved Paola and sought her society, the whole scheme must inevitably be defeated.

In the morning the trio of conspirators convened, and Inez said:

"The time for concealment is past. Thomas Kittridge, alias James Wetherby, the man whom you have last introduced into the bosom of your family, is my husband! Imagine the effect of this announcement upon my dear, confiding cousin, Paola. But these two have met, and, my word for it, are in love with each other, or will be, if further meeting is not prevented."

"Thomas Kittridge, alias James Wetherby, can you retrieve the blunder you have made?"

"She shall leave the city to-morrow," said her guardian, wincing under her iteration of his true name.

"Not so," objected Inez. "When she leaves the city, it must be in company with Leslie Mansfield, with a view to marrying him."

"Curse Leslie Mansfield!" growled Asa Dillingham, with an ugly scowl.

"Billic! what's the matter with you?" asked Wetherby, while Inez stared in surprise.

"Look here," said Dillingham. "I'm ugly; but I'm flesh and blood; and, damme! I'm in love with this little woman myself."

"The deuce you are!" cried Wetherby. Inez smiled contemptuously.

"We've got another plan to propose," pursued Dillingham. "Let me have the girl; and we can divide the money just the same."

"A capital plan!" laughed Wetherby.

"Open to two or three slight objections, however," added Inez.

"What objections?"

"You robbed of innocence!" cried Wetherby; "do you think we'd trust such a knave as you? When you 'ad the girl, and through her the title to the money, 'ow nicely you'd set 'us adrift!"

"With the prospect of your splitting on me?"

"And going to prison for conspiracy, hem-bentment, and the Lord knows what all! 'No, no—not for Joe!"

"But more than that, it would be impossible to force her into a marriage with you," added Inez. "My dear sir, there is a limit to human endurance. She would appeal to the public for protection."

"Ha! ha! ha! Hit's your beauty, Haas!" laughed Wetherby. "Why, man, if a woman were to marry you voluntarily, hany court would set the contract aside on the ground of insanity!"

Asa Dillingham smiled, putting his clammy fingers to his livid lips, and his basilisk eyes glittered in very unpleasant fashion. Perhaps he did not forego his purpose.

"Enough of this!" interposed Inez, impatiently. "Mr. Hazeltine must be excluded from the house, and our first plan pushed at once. There's no need of longer delay. Let Paola be notified of what she has to expect to-day."

That afternoon Paola was called into her guardian's presence.

"My dear," began Wetherby, with some nervousness. "I have sent for you on a very important matter—vital, I may say, to your 'ole future."

"To what can you refer?" asked the girl, curiously.

"You are now twenty years of age?"

"Last month."

"Most women are married before that age."

"But I don't want to marry, guardie."

"Nevertheless, it would be better for you."

"But I don't love any one."

"A school-girl's notion!—the effect of the dense hallowed young people in this country. But, for heaven's sake, let your parents or guardians, a light pair of 'eels isn't considered sufficient qualification for a husband. I've selected a man with money and social position. None of your fly-aways; but a solid establishment—one 'ow will give you an establishment."

"Whom, guardie?" asked the girl, breathlessly.

"Haas Dillingham!"

"Asa Dillingham!"

The girl stared, and then burst into a laugh.

"Why, guardie, the best! 'I thought you were in earnest. You look as sober as a judge."

"And why shouldn't I be in earnest?" demanded Wetherby, in a tone of dogged severity. "I don't see anything to hexcite you to mirth."

"Oh! but Mr. Dillingham!"

"Well, Mr. Dillingham, a man known and 'ighly respected by your mother."

"And therefore altogether too old for me!" said Paola, quickly—"not to add that he isn't handsome."

"Andsome is as 'andsome does! As for 'age, holder men 'ave married younger women, and 'apply, too. But, sentiment aside, Mr. Dillingham is a man hevery way worthy of you. 'E 'as proposed to me for your 'and; and is ready to settle twenty thousand pounds sterling on you the day of your marriage. There's no nonsense about twenty thousand pounds!"

"But I'd rather not sell myself, even for so high a figure!" Paola persisted.

"My dear, I've expressed my wishes. Of course I expect obedience. Mr. Dillingham leaves for Hingham six weeks from to-day. I've promised 'im that 'is bride shall be ready for 'im."

"Oh, uncle—"

"No more at present. You will begin your preparations at once. If you will hexcuse me, I will remain in the city."

With white lips and whirling brain Paola left the library, sought her cousin Inez and cast herself weeping into her arms.

It was the bird going to the serpent for protection and sympathy!

## CHAPTER XXIV.

## THE FAITHFUL SERVANT.

WITH a terrible frown Harry Hazeltine whirled upon his servant.

"What is the meaning of this?" he cried, shaking the door with unreasoning impatience. "Eccellenza, do you forget that the door is locked in accordance with your orders?"

"Open it at once!"

Pardon, eccellenza. You charged me to retain the key, no matter what happened, or what you might do."

"Well, I have changed my mind. I revoke the command. Produce the key."

"Still pardon, eccellenza. It is not your better self that speaks now."

"What! Dare you palter with me?"

"You made it a test of my love."

"You refuse to obey me?"

"I must protect you from yourself."

"Slave!" thundered the enraged master.

White with fury he leaped upon the devoted Vikir, clutched him by the throat, dashed him to the floor with one sweep of his powerful arm, and planted a foot on his breast.

The West Indian offered no resistance; but gazing up into his master's face with sorrowing reproach, he said:

"Eccellenza, my life is yours. Take it! And when I am dead, thinking why I died, your nobler self will gain the ascendancy. You will be saved! For me, it is enough to know that Vikir never failed the master he loved, and to whom he owed so much."

At these words—at this devotion, a swift transition took place in Harry's feelings. Lifting his faithful servant up, he cried, with tears in his eyes:

"Forgive me, Vikir! Your generosity overwhelms me with shame. My friend, you are right. Your devotion shall save me. I will never enter that accursed room again!"

"Eccellenza, again I recognize you!" cried Vikir, falling upon his knees and covering his master's hand with kisses. "How proud and happy am I that my love prevails!"

"Vikir, it will prevail, if you stand firm."

"Eccellenza, may I ask a favor?"

"Anything, Vikir, after the wrong I have done you."

"Speak not of that, my master. It is for you alone that I think. While you are strong in good resolves, put the temptation forever away from you. Let me enter yonder and destroy the demon!"

Harry hesitated.

"Eccellenza, are you sincere in the purpose you have avowed?"

"Yes, Vikir."

"Then why cling to that which destroys?"

"My faithful friend, my brother, do as you wish!" cried Harry, putting all vacillation resolutely from him.

"Eccellenza, mil gracias! We shall triumph!" cried Vikir, delightedly.

But good resolve did not lay the demon of unrest which possessed Harry Hazeltine. A woman—one of the hated and distrusted sex—had seduced him from his loyalty to his friend. More than this, he had to confess to himself what he had not revealed to Vikir, that considerations of her had much to do with his abandonment of that room which the West Indian said contained the curse of his life.

Making inquiry at Captain Taunton's hotel, he learned that Ned was sleeping.

He found it intolerable to wait in one place, and so set out in the darkness to walk until exhaustion should subdue his excitement.

Alone in the stillness and solitude of the night, he thought of Paola, and of that other who had wrecked his life. And gradually his spirit took on some of the tranquillity of the calm sky.

One thing that Paola had said recurred to his mind. She had appealed to him in the name of his mother, and of his sister, if he had one.

Now he remembered how in all his childish griefs he had gone to his mother's breast, as to a sure haven. He recalled the calm, steady light of her eye, her gentle touch, her love that never failed, but serenely, with his abandonment of that room which the West Indian said contained the curse of his life.

There had been a little sister, too, who used to romp with him. He heard again her childish laugh of rippling music. The memory of her innocent smile shot athwart his mental vision like a ray of sunshine. How quickly, too, had sprung to her eye the sympathetic tear.

And all these things seemed to have their counterpart in Paola. It was as if the spirits of the departed had come back to woo him from darkness through the portals of his mind.

Oh! if he could trust her! His heart hungered for love—for woman's love. His mother—his sister—they had been true. He could never doubt them. And she was so like them!

But then the image of Inez with her fair seeming rose before his imagination; and dragging his hat over his eyes and clenching his teeth to keep back the bitter tears, the man strode on.

So waged the conflict until with the dawn he sought again his friend, and afterward went to his own apartments, to snatch a little sleep.

He noticed a look of suspense on Vikir's face. Opening the door to his sleeping apartment, he stopped on the threshold.

The curtain was gone. The door to the mysterious chamber stood wide open. The room itself, made cheerful by the morning sunlight streaming in through an open window, now contained a bed, a table, a chair, a desk, a desk, and books and papers and writing materials.

Harry Hazeltine turned pale, and bent upon his servant a look of awakening disapproval.

"Eccellenza, you have crossed into the enemy's country, and in the terrible struggle that is at hand you must feel that the bridges are burnt behind you."

In the face of the West Indian there was an impressive blending of humility and firmness.

"If I can only," said his master, taking his hand. "You have cut off all chance of retreat. I shall depend solely on your wisdom and sustaining strength."

"Gracias, eccellenza!"

Thus began a struggle which was to call into play all the physical and mental resources of this man. To sustain the fight he might draw inspiration from Vikir's devotion and Paola's purity!

But the enemy would make terrible havoc with him. She must not see him again until he was victorious. He must not see her. And in disguise he sought a fashionable park, where she drove every day. Little did she know the burning glances cast at her by an elderly gentleman who was almost altogether hidden by a jasmine vine which burdened an elm by the wayside.

But from this covert Harry saw her; and beside her rode a woman who was always veiled and had the air of an invalid.

Perhaps this companion was the cousin whom he had missed seeing? But Harry had no time to look at one in whom he felt no interest. His attention was fixed by Paola's face.

In it was an unwonted pallor and a look of distress which increased from day to day. What did it mean?

If he could but fly to her, he would stand between her and every sorrow. But he could not. She would have been startled by his altered appearance.

A terrible change had taken place in him. His face was haggard; his eyes were staring, with almost the glitter of insanity; his nerves twitched and he was possessed by a restlessness which drove him from one place to place like the scourge of a Nemesis.

Only one thing could fix his attention for more than a moment at a time. He found where Paola's driver was in the habit of stopping, to breathe his horses and give the ladies a view of the animal scene presented by the fashionable drive thronged with gay equipages.

Here, screened by some foliage, he could sit and watch the face of the woman he loved. The frightened look in her eyes, which he had not seen there before, fascinated him, until he forgot the pain that thrilled every nerve of his body.

But before we recount the result of this espionage, we must touch upon another event which occurred some days previous to the point we have now reached in our narrative.

Two nights subsequent to the night of Paola's recognition, Vikir, passing alone through the streets when he came face to face with Don Manuel Rubio.

At sight of the Don, Vikir stopped with a smothered ejaculation, while his eyes gleamed with sudden fire, and his hand sought the handle of his dagger.

The recognition must have been mutual, for Don Manuel turned a sickly yellow with pallor. But he passed on without seeming to notice the West Indian.

"Caramba!" reflected the Spaniard. "Both have seen the sea! And I am recognized! This devil will hunt me down! Ah! as I thought, he is following me!"

"Paola Garcia!" was Vikir's mental ejaculation, and, turning, he followed the Spaniard at a little distance.

The diabolical, ill-lighted street was deserted. He was tracking his man with the fierceness of some wild beast in his native clime.

Without seeming to notice that he was followed, Don Manuel kept on. He was planning some way to dispose of this implacable enemy. He could not appeal to the law for protection. Publicity meant death on the scaffold, as a murderer.

Leaving the crowded thoroughfare, he worked his way toward a disreputable part of the city. Gallatin street, with its dark alleys, where crime lurked as a wild beast in its lair, offered him the opportunity he sought.

Walking rapidly, with the consciousness that Vikir was close behind him, perhaps intending to close in and avenge the murderous assault, years ago, on his master, Don Manuel turned a sharp corner and stopped.

Some distance away he saw the light from a red-curtained window, and heard the discordant music, and harsh voices raised in the bacchanal revel of some sailors' dance-house.

Drawing a pistol, he grasped it by the barrel firmly, and waited.

Vikir came round the corner.

There was a rush, a blow, and without a groan the West Indian fell to the ground. His enemy had outwitted him!

But a form started from the shadow. A heavy hand fell on Don Manuel's shoulder.

"Eh! you accursed bravo—"

But the words of the policeman were cut short.

A swift blow, and he reeled against the building, while his prisoner fled precipitately.

The man was only partially stunned. He had presence of mind enough to spring his rattle, and a moment later started in pursuit.

Responding whirrs sounded in other directions, and the fall of hurrying feet came through the night.

Severely guardians of the peace assembled, but their man had eluded them in the darkness.

Returning, they took the unconscious Vikir to a station-house. On his recovery he stated that he had been attacked while going about his business. So the affair passed as an ordinary attempt at robbery.

But to his master Vikir said:

"Eccellenza, Pablo Garcia is in the city!"

(To be continued—commenced in No. 504.)

## En Passant.

## A BOY MARKSMAN.

CAPTAIN BOGARDUS, remarkable as he is as a marksman, is probably to be outdone by his own son, Eugene. At the exhibition of the boy's skill in St. Paul, Minnesota, he proved himself a real prodigy. He is but fourteen years old. A St. Paul paper, speaking of the lad's feat, says: "With his little rifle, resembling more a toy firearm than a death-dealing instrument, he astonished the lookers-on by breaking thirty-seven out of fifty glass balls thrown into the air, besides many other odd and difficult feats. When Dr. Carver gave his exhibition at the fair grounds, last season, people looked upon them as remarkable and wonderful. But now comes a mere youth, who, almost with his toy rifle, does equally, if not more, difficult feats. Carver used a large rifle, of which Eugene's is but a miniature copy. Eugene's shooting record yesterday is ahead of anything Dr. Carver has done. Despite a strong wind, he not only showed himself able to break glass balls, but to his half-dollars, quarters, marbles, nickels, and even three-cent pieces. His quiet, impassive, retiring demeanor is also a matter of wonderment. Apparently unconscious of performing any extraordinary feat, he continues to load and fire his little piece, in no way elated at his success. Eugene is certainly a prodigy, and will, no doubt, astonish the world with still more remarkable performances in his line."

## THE FORTY THOUSAND ACRE FARM.

The largest cultivated wheat farm on the globe is said to be the Grondin farm, not far from the town of Fargo, N. D. It embraces some 40,000 acres, both Government and railway land, and lies close to the Red River. Divided into four parts, it has dwellings, granaries, machine shops, elevators, stables for 200 horses, and room for storing 1,000,000 bushels of grain. Besides the wheat farm to be a stock farm of 20,000 acres. In seeding time seventy to eighty men are employed, and during harvest 250 to 300 men. Seeding begins about April 9th, and continues through the month, and is done very systematically, the machines following one another around the field some four rods apart. Cutting begins about Aug. 4th, and ends the fore part of September, succeeded by the thrashing, with eight steam-threshers. After thrashing, the stubble-ground is plowed with great plows drawn by three horses and cutting two furrows; and this goes on until the weather is cold enough to freeze, usually about Nov. 1st. There are many other large farms in the Territory and in the neighborhood, and they are filled in much the same manner as the Grondin. The surface of the land generally is almost level, and the soil rich and black. The product of one acre is 3,315 bushels of wheat, and the average weight—some twenty-five bushels to the acre. The average yield of the Dakota wheat farm is from twenty to twenty-five bushels per acre, and the concurrent testimony is that it is unequalled as a wheat region in the world.

## GIGANTIC KANGAROO.

PROFESSOR COPE of Philadelphia recently gave to the San Francisco Academy a description of two fossil animals. One of these was an enormous vertebrate somewhat resembling an aquatic kangaroo, named the *camarasaurus supremus*, whose neck was nine feet in diameter, whose hind legs were twenty feet long, whose spinal vertebrae were fifty-six inches across, and which must have been seventy-two feet long by measurements carefully taken. This animal could walk in forty feet of water and catch its prey with its fore-paws. He also described another similar monster found in the same strata, named the *amphibolus fragilis*, whose spinal vertebrae were six feet across and whose hind legs were forty feet long, with carnivorous teeth placed in the upper and lower jaws like shears, so as to cut up animal food, by traversing each other in the most perfect manner. The bones of the lower half of this animal were solid and very heavy to keep its feet down in the water, while the bones in the upper half of its body were built in honeycombed layers as thick as pasteboard, strong, but very light and buoyant in water. This monster has been named *amphibolus fragilis*, and must have been considerably over one hundred feet in length. Both these animals have large and powerful tails like kangaroos, and when catching their food in the water must have appeared as if on three-legged stools, the tail acting as an equal support of the tripod.

## A LEADVILLE WAGER.

THERE is a leading that cannot be made the subject of a wager. In Leadville men are driven to their wits' end for matters to bet on. The Herald of that brand-new city tells of some young men who discussed the question of hanging a fortnight ago, at the month of a shaft. One insisted that by holding the head over forward, with the knot directly behind, respiration could be maintained for a quarter of an hour. The others ridiculed the idea. "I'll bet \$5 I can let you haul me up the shaft," said the young man, "with a rope around my neck, and I'll come out alive." The idea was fascinating, the bet was formally made, the money put up, the young athlete suspended under the bucket by the neck and the engine started. The distance was seventy-five feet. The progress seemed to him very slow for about a second, and then he became unconscious. His companions were in one bucket watching the experiment. They put on steam, but by the time the inanimate form reached the surface it presented a horrible appearance. At first it was thought that the young man was dead, but a careful examination of the body convinced a miner of experience that he was only insensible. Vigorous rubbing, with the additional influence of liquor forced down the throat, had the effect of restoring consciousness in half an hour. He now thinks that hanging a man by the neck will kill him if he hangs long enough. But he won his \$5.

## RUSSIAN BRUTALITY.

THE Russian revolutionary journals must make converts wherever they are read, when they relate revolting instances of tyranny such as this: Kabatschenko, an infirm old man, was summoned before the Burgomaster, and asked if he had brought a balance of certain taxes that were due. He begged for time. "As soon as I have earned something,"







## ANSWER.

BY EMILIE CLARE.

Oh, cunning poet of a well-tuned lyre,  
You've trespassed on the silvery voice of speech,  
And lighted it with a Prometheus fire,  
Through earth and sky, where symphonies can reach.

"The sweet warm rain" is not a silence falling,  
But low-toned message from an All-wise power—  
A measured, mystic poem, softly calling  
Man's promised harvest and the tender flower.

The lightning's flash companioned with the thunder,  
I care not if its voice be loud or low,  
To me has language; and transfixed, I wonder  
At Him whose hand has fashioned all below.

"The still, small voice" does not convey a silence;  
'Tis silver, coiled in crucible of mind.  
Then whispered forth in a harmonious cadence,  
In softest sweetness on the passing wind.

The brooklet's babble or the meteor's hissing—  
Oh, list their teaching, dear and honored bard!  
A poet's heart can understand their language  
And drink with rapture every potent word.

But earth, air, sea hath each a language  
Whether in storm, or wind, or foam-capped waves,  
For Nature's book is written full and plainly.  
Though man may win his knowledge from its caves.

## How Their Happiness Came.

BY MARY REED CROWELL.

ST. CLARENCE stood looking at her, his face full of white pain, his grave handsome eyes showing eloquently the anguish and desolation of his spirit.

For a moment earlier, Winifred Champney had refused him—gently, but with distress on her sweet, pure face and keen regret that she was forced to make him suffer so, in her low, pitiful tones.

But, for all her sweetness and tenderness and sympathy and distress she had been resolute. "I so thank you for your regard for me, Mr. St. Clarence. I shall ever remember it as one of the brightest spots in my life. But"—and her voice had lowered to an inexpressible gentle tone, whose very carefulness and pitifulness maddened him—"I do not love you, and I would not dare marry where I did not love."

She was so sweet and winsome to see, so womanly and delicate for a girl of nineteen. And so lovely in her beauty—slight, graceful, dignified, always a little more grave and thoughtful than other girls of her age and position in society, and even more grave and dignified since the troubles had come upon her that left her to face the world without parents or money.

St. Clarence had always worshipped her, since the time a year or so before when her father had taken him home to dinner one evening and introduced him to Mrs. Champney and Winifred, with an after-ardent recommendation to their notice and friendship.

And now, when, in one little half-year, there had occurred the startling series of pitiful calamities to the girl, her parents both taken from her, and the magnificent home literally sold over her head, it had been as Winifred said, one of the brightest memories of those inexpressibly weary times that Carrol St. Clarence had offered her his hand and love, his name and fortune.

Only she could not accept because, as she had gently, honestly told him, she did not love him. And to such a girl as Winifred Champney, St. Clarence's fortune and social position were no temptations, whatever.

So St. Clarence had made his ardent, passionate plea, and been rejected, and then, stood looking at her, pale, his face pale, his heart and soul so longed to gather to his breast, and kiss forever away the solemn shadows out of the dusky eyes.

"But I cannot have you go out in the world and be buffeted about as a cruel Destiny arbitrarily chooses! Winifred—even if you don't love me, let me take care of you and care for you! Winifred, my dear little girl, do you think I can endure the luxuries and elegancies of my lonely home, knowing the woman I love, the woman I want, is working for daily wages, perhaps hungry, perhaps not suitably clothed, often weary and lonely, and certainly with no one to cheer, protect, and comfort? Oh, my darling, be merciful! Come to me and let me teach you how to love me. I will try to be content with what you can give me—friendly trust and regard. Winifred—think again, I pray you!"

She shook her little dusky head, that was so firmly and proudly poised on her fair white throat.

"It cannot possibly be, dear Mr. St. Clarence. I am not afraid to face the world, but I am afraid to bestow my hand where my heart cannot be given."

And with her firm, gentle resoluteness he had to be content; and he went away from the plain little boarding-house, where, in exchange for music lessons to two refractory girls, Winifred was allowed comfortable accommodations—went away with his heart crushed to the very earth, and feeling as if never again would the sun shine golden-bright for him.

While Winifred went slowly up to the little plain room which was not so pleasant as had been the servants' rooms in Mr. Champney's avenue mansion.

There was a little look of pain on her mouth and a deep, troubled expression in her eyes as she sat patiently down to some sewing.

"I could not have done otherwise—oh, it would have been dreadful to have promised to be his wife just because he could save me from this life! I wish I could love him, I have tried and tried, and I cannot!"

And then, the matter thus conscientiously settled in her own mind, Winifred went on in her plain, new, dull little way of living, to be suddenly and sharply aroused from it, a day two or three weeks later by a telegram from Carrol St. Clarence, that briefly said only this:

"I am dying. Will you come to me?"

Dying! Her own good friend, her own dear friend. Dying. It seemed a cruel mockery to think of his dying in the flush and glory of maturity, with everything in the world to live for.

She hastened to him as fast as the first express train could take her, to find him lying pale and peaceful, waiting for the woman he loved.

He could still speak, weakly, laboriously, but his face grew radiant with a tenderness that seemed less of mortal joy than the reflection from the hither shore, when she knelt weeping by him.

"No—this is best for me, Winifred," he said, tenderly. "I would rather die like this, with you here beside me, than live without you. My darling, do you know why I have sent for you?"

Even amid all the pity and desolation in her heart, she shivered at his suggestive words.

"Oh, my friend Carrol!"

He interrupted her, quietly.

"I want you to let me give you my name before I go, dear. I want you to know how thoroughly and perfectly I love you. You will not refuse. It is the last request I shall make of a human being—don't refuse me this—don't send me away—out yonder—without granting me this. It will not hurt you, Winifred—I will not be here to annoy—you will be comfortable and happy and free as ever—and I—"

He smiled in her horrified eyes.

"Oh, Carrol—no! no! I cannot take advantage of you—I dare not be so cruelly selfish!"

"I understand, dear—fully. But, you seem to forget how it will take the last sting from my dying pillow, how it will lighten the way clear to the Beyond if I may know my wife weeps for me!"

Her beautiful face was pale as his, her eyes glowed like dusky stars, her voice was clear, intense.

"Will it do that for you, my friend? Knowing all you know, will it please and comfort you?"

"It will make me welcome death to call you my wife on my little hour!"

"Then, Carrol, whenever you are ready, I am ready."

And so, a half-hour later, the family clergyman stood at Carrol St. Clarence's bedside, and in the presence of the dying man's mother and sister, and the gray-haired physician, Winifred Champney was made Carrol St. Clarence's wife.

Nor, except for the mortal pallor of her face, and the deathly coldness of her hand, did the man who loved her know of the terrible agony that was in her mind.

And then, the minister went away, and Effie St. Clarence kissed the dear, peaceful, radiant face on the pillow, and threw her arms around Winifred's neck and sobbed out her anguish and gratitude, and the dear, quivering-lipped old mother blessed her boy's wife, and Dr. Dudley shook her hand warmly.

"I only wish I might have seen this under other circumstances, Mrs. St. Clarence," he said, and nobody but the man who loved her saw the uncontrollable shudder that surged over Winifred at sound of the new name.

An hour or so later the family lawyer was closeted with St. Clarence, and when Winifred was called in, afterward, her husband's face was so exquisitely peaceful and satisfied that it almost startled her.

"Dr. Dudley tells me there is only an hour or so more, in all probability—everything is done, my wife. I am at peace with the world, my conscience and my God. Sit here, with me, dear, until—the last. I want your sweet face to be the last I see this side."

So there they were, she, cold, pale, strung to a nervous tension that was agony to endure, and he—perceptibly growing further and further away, until, like a baby on its mother's breast, he closed his eyes, and—

All through the night they watched and waited for the breath to flutter away forever, and just when the dawn began to break Dr. Dudley took his fingers off the wrist, and turned with a choked, solemn voice:

"Thanks be to God! Carrol will live! The crisis has passed and his pulse has been strengthening steadily for fifteen minutes!"

And the next second Winifred lay in a dead faint on the floor beside her husband's bed.

Her husband! And he would live! And she—did not love him! God be pitiful!

Such fearful days followed—and yet nobody but they two understood anything about it, and even they did not wholly understand each other.

Such awful days when Winifred, prayed that at heart she might not be a murderer, that God would give her strength to endure the life forced upon her; when St. Clarence cursed the fate that spared him, because she was so cruelly punished by the mistake of it all.

Days and weeks and months passed, finding Winifred always at her post, always where a fond, loving wife would be; finding her growing more and more patient and even more sweetly gentle than ever if that were possible—while St. Clarence grew restless and impatient and the one great dread of his life, the dread lest she should after awhile hate him instead of being simply indifferent as she was now, grew on him like a nightmare.

Until, one day he announced his intention of going abroad—to gain strength, he told Winifred—to rid her of him she knew so well he must not.

"And alone, Carrol?"

"Alone—certainly," he said, almost harshly in his bitterness. For who was there in all the world to go with him?

So, he made his preparations, with a heart heavy as lead, and a heart that suffered untold agony as he saw the new glad light that was daily coming in his wife's eyes—joy at the speedy prospect of being separated from him, temporarily.

And then, he said good-by, and went his way, by easy stages, and at frequent stops, until he reached the lovely summer land of Florida—a heartick, heartsome man, who would rather have laid down his life than to live longer the solitary, loveless existence that Fate had apportioned him.

And yet—despite all his bitterness, his soul-sickness, his brain and heart were such as glowed in expectation of the letter from his wife, he knew would be there.

Only—it was not there!

And he went slowly, despairingly to the rooms engaged by telegraph, wondering why all of his life and hope and joy and love such as glowed other men's lives were denied him, wondering—

And opening the door to see Winifred waiting for him—Winifred, all her passionate soul in her eyes, all her sweet, yearning nature in the low cry which she sprang to him.

"Oh, Carrol! I could not let you leave me! I did not know, until you were gone, that—"

His face was pale as death. He looked at her—one glance in which their hearts were unvalued, one moment when it seemed that heaven had suddenly opened to them.

"Winifred! My wife!"

"Carrol, oh, Carrol, my darling, my darling!"

And so their happiness came to them.

BY MAJOR DANGERFIELD BURR,  
5TH CAVALRY, U. S. ARMY.

CHAPTER XIV.  
THE NIGHTWALKERS.

THOUGH recognizing at a glance that he was in a trap, and that every man he saw before him was an enemy, Buffalo Bill showed not the slightest sign of fear, but said with a smile:

"This is a strange way to receive a friend, pard."

Each glanced at the other, and then the leader answered:

"We don't know who is friends, nowadays, and has to look upon all comers as enemies; but tell me, how many is with you?"

"My horse and myself are all: I was on my way to the settlements, started to camp at the foot of the hill, and seeing your light came on here," said the Scout, quietly.

"That was when you opened that door, Jim Haskins; I tell yer, light kin be seen a long way off, and we must be keerful," said the leader, who now lowered his revolver, his comrades following suit.

Pretending to misunderstand the leader, Buffalo Bill replied:

"Yes, one has to be careful, for Pawnee-Killer's band of Sioux are abroad now on the war-path."

"We don't keer a cuss for Pawnee-Killer and his Sioux, pard; it are our own kin we're afeerd of, as you well knows, fer I is acquainted with who you be," and the man looked straight in the face of the Scout, who asked in a curious way:

"Why should white men be afraid of their own kind?"

"Have you ever heard o' the Nightwalkers, pard?"

"Yes; they are a gang of desperadoes and horse-thieves that are the curse of this border, raiding only in the dark, stealing and murdering, and never fighting unless cornered," was the fearless reply of Buffalo Bill.

"You has us down fine, pard."

"You! you are certainly joking," said the Scout, with well-affected surprise.

"I guesses not; we is the Nightwalkers, of whom, you has just spoke so good," was the leader's remark.

"Why, there's a reward of five hundred dollars on the head of each one of you."

"True as Gospel, pard, and there is thirteen o' us here, so you can figger up how much we'd bring ef yer was to take us all in, an' p'raps you'd better try."

This was said menacingly, and determined not to show that he feared them, Buffalo Bill said quickly:

"If I had three good men with me, I'd try it, anyhow; but what is your pleasure with me, for I'm not a fool to attempt to fight all of you?"

"Waal, how w'd yer like to jine ther band? Looks as ef thar was grit in yer."

"Thank you, I'm no thief."

"You has a sweet way o' putting it; but now tell us who you is?"

"That is none of your business."

"By jingo! but you has got grit; we'll see ef it holds out."

"Pard, I knows who he is, and I has had cause to."

The speaker was standing in the background, but now he stepped forward, and Buffalo Bill recognized him as a man who had once been a soldier and had deserted after killing a sergeant, but who he had captured and taken back to the fort, where he was sentenced to be shot, yet escaped death by making his escape a few hours before the time appointed for his execution.

Though he knew that the deserter had threatened to kill him for capturing him, Buffalo Bill was determined to have the thing out, and said:

"Hello! Dick Lightfoot, we meet again!"

"Yes, an' I guess it'll be our last meeting, Buffalo Bill."

The name was upon every lip in chorus, as Buffalo Bill spoke it, for though no one else present seemed to know the famous Scout by sight, one and all knew him well by reputation, and feared him more than any man on the border, as he had always proven himself the bitter foe of renegades and horse-thieves.

"Pard, that settles it, you kin't get long to tarry here on 'rth, and you'd better sing out a leetle Gospel-music," said the leader, while every revolver in the crowd again covered the broad breast of the Scout.

With a fearless smile upon his handsome face, Buffalo Bill spoke, with folded arms, before the scowling Nightwalkers, who just waited the signal of their leader to kill him in his tracks.

But that signal was not given, and the tableau was continued for a full minute, each one mentally acknowledging the splendid nerve of the man before them, who so indifferently looked into the threatening muzzles.

"Pard, you has game an' no mistake; but what is we ter do with yer?"

"You just intimated that you intended to kill me."

"Intimidated?"

"Yes, I s'pose I did, but I pass on big words; they gives me ther toothache, so sling out small ones; now, what is we ter do with yer?"

"If you ask me the question, I answer, let me go."

"But I don't axe ther question; I only hates to see a man kilt as has got your grit, an' I says to my pards, what is we ter do with yer?"

"You remember our orders from the chief?" suggested the deserter, whom Buffalo Bill had called Dick Lightfoot.

"Yes, ther chief said as how we was ter kill Buffler Bill the moment we set eyes 'pon him; now, pard, won't yer jist make some leetle trouble, so we can drap on yer?" and the man turned again to the Scout, who answered, promptly:

"As Dick Lightfoot seems to want me out of the way, I'll fight it out with him, and if I kill him, then let me go."

Several voices at once cried out in favor of this proposition, but the deserter did not seem to relish the anticipated meeting, and said, quickly:

"Yes, and then he'll go and bring the soldiers down upon the balance of you; no, I move that we kill him, and then we are safe."

"Them is words of wisdom, pard, and as the chief said to kill him, it's got to be done," and the leader turned to Buffalo Bill and continued:

"Has you any favorite mode o' dying, pard?"

"Never having tried it, I cannot say that I have."

"Then we'll make it as pleasant for yer as we conveniently can; now, pard, jist hand me yer shavin'-irons."

As the man advanced toward Buffalo Bill he failed to notice the lightning glance the prisoner sent around him, and the manner in which he prepared to gather himself, like a tiger preparing to spring.

That the men would kill him, he knew that; there was not the slightest doubt, and that his chances of escape were painfully few he also well understood.

But certain death would quickly follow if he surrendered his weapons, and there was a chance in his favor if he resisted.

With one lightning glance he took in the odds for and against him, and then said:

"Pards, I guess you won't be so cruel as to kill an unarmed man, so here are my pistols, if you want them."

He unbuckled his belt as he spoke and held it forth, while the leader and the deserter stepped briskly forward to take it.

But just as they stretched forth their hands to grasp the belt, it fell to the ground, and two revolvers whirled about, thrust forward and fired in half a second's time.

The reports of the pistols, yells, and a crashing sound came almost together, and then the Nightwalkers were aware that two of their comrades lay dead on the floor of the "dug-out," that the door had been broken open by one powerful kick, and that Buffalo Bill had fled.

With wild cries they started in pursuit, not five seconds behind him, but from the light into darkness momentarily blinded their eyes, and not knowing which way he had gone, they fired at random as they ran.

In the meantime Buffalo Bill fled with the speed of a deer down the steep hillside, well knowing that the desperadoes would rapidly follow him, and anxious to reach his horse before they came up.

After several rather severe falls, in the darkness being unable to see where he placed his feet, he reached the ravine where his horse was concealed, and quickly saddled and bridled him; but ere he could mount there came a flash and report, and a bullet whistled over his head, showing that his pursuers had followed him rapidly, and had discovered him.

"Hold on, pard!" yelled a hoarse voice, and another flash and report followed, but again the aim was untrue, and an answering shot from the Scout went straight to the mark, and the renegade uttered a loud cry and sprang backward a step or two to then fall dead, just as several of his comrades dashed up to the spot.

But Buffalo Bill was already in his saddle, and a word to his horse sent the noble animal away like an arrow from a bow, followed by a rattling volley of pistol shots.

"A close shave for life that; but it's war now between me and these Nightwalkers," muttered the Scout, as he urged his horse on rapidly across the rolling prairies, congratulating himself over and over again upon his escape from certain death.

## CHAPTER XV.

A BRACE OF VILLAINS.

FROM the high haunts of the far frontier, where the adventurous settler, the reckless desperado, the fearless borderman, and the untamed red-skin are to be found in their glory, amid the prairies and mountains, to the marts of civilization, in the handsome city of St. Louis, I will now ask my reader to accompany me.

In a dingy room on a narrow street of St. Louis, sat a man, whose dark face, black eyes and hook nose at once indicated that he was a Jew.

He was dressed in a suit of black broadcloth, almost clerical in its cut, and yet wore a large

gold chain, to which hung a red seal, and upon his little finger glittered a diamond of great size and beauty.

Yet the surroundings were not such as to indicate that the rooms were those of a man of wealth, as a single bed, a wash-stand and table, several chairs and a trunk made up the furniture; yet, there dwelt Moses Moloch, the rich Jew bachelor of St. Louis, and a man whose wealth caused him to be sought after by many who even disliked him, and who had won the title of *millionaire* by taking advantage of the adversity of others.

On the street, in society, or dining at some fashionable hotel, Moses Moloch was under observation, and looked and lived well; but in his own room he felt that he was free from public gaze, and spent not a dollar more than necessary upon home comforts, for very few were ever invited across the threshold of the Jew's abiding place at night.

As he now sat in his easy-chair, his face wore a cunning leer, while he muttered to himself:

"Yes, dey vill all pelongs to me; t'e houses, t'e lants, and all dat he owns, and I vill get me mooch money, pesides dat I get me mooch revenge dat he vas tam me when I ask his leetle girl to marry mit me; and she vas mat mit me, too, and tell me dat I vas forget myself; vell, vell, vell, we vill see who forgets deyself now—ah, dere is de shudge."

A knock at the door caused Moses Moloch to spring to his feet and approach it.

"Who ish dere?" he asked.

"Moses, I say, are you deaf?" answered a stentorian voice from without, followed by another pounding upon the door, which the Jew hastily opened, with an angry:

"No, I ish not deaf, shudge. Vell, come in."

At this invitation there entered a stout little gentleman, whose important strut and pompous air gave one the idea of a bantam rooster putting on airs.

He was flashily-dressed, wore a swallow-tail coat, wide checked pants, a high stock and standing collar, and white gloves. Upon his head was a white high hat, and in his hand he carried a gold-headed cane.

Marching across the room he seated himself in the Jew's easy-chair, placed his hat upon the table, and leaning forward on his cane, carefully surveyed the furniture, while he burst forth with:

"I say, Moses, you don't put on style at home; there's where you are economical; but I must not complain, as this is the first time I have had the honor of being invited here. Well, what news?"

"Vell, I ish got a letter from a frint o' mine, vas to talk mit you, an' p'raps dat I want her to."

"Go ahead, my fine fellow, especially if there is money in it."

"Vell, you knows dat I pays you when you ish work for me?"

"Yes, yes, and I do my work well; but what's it?"

"I have me some leetle troubles, I vill tell you about; you know dat Mish Louise Melville was refuse my hant and my heart?"

"So you hinted to me once; but it was merely on account of religious scruples, I assure you, for what other motive could she have had?"

The remark of the "Judge," for he only held that title by courtesy, seemed to please the Jew, who replied:

"Vell, she is a Presbyterian and I ish a Hebrew, dat ish a fact; but, she wouldn't marry me, and ther fader vas very mat dat I want her to, and dat make me mat, so I says to myself, 'Moses, you ish want to get vat you call even mit dat girl and her papa, and I have arrange to get all t'e moneys dat pelongs to them.'"

"A noble idea; and how will you do it, Moses?"

"Vell, I holts her papa's notes for all he is wort, and as she has monish of her own, I want to get dat too, so I finds her a husband."

"Mr. Marmaduke?"

"Yes, that rich young gentleman now stopping at the hotel where I—I—"

"Where you ish take a drink when you get treated, shudge? Yes, dat ish t'e young mans what I mean."

"Vell, surely she can have no objection to him, for he is as rich as a prince, they say."

"Yes, for thirty days; how much you tink it takes a prince to live thirty days, shudge?" asked the Jew, with a cunning leer.

"Well, let me see: say five thousand dollars, judging by what I live on."

"Five thousand dollars! Vell, dat ish joost vat I gives t'e young man, and he is to marry t'e girl, and get ther monish for me."

"Ah! a great thought, and one worthy of my stupendous brain, Moses. So this young Noel Marmaduke, who has St. Louis society by the ears, so to speak, is one of your tools?"

"Yes, he ish work for me. You know he is a goot young man, and steal somet'ings in New York what I know all about, and I vas get him away from the penitentiary, and he do what I tell him, and marry the girl."

"Yes, yes; and you shant the wealth he gets by his marriage, or he goes back to prison?"

"Shudge, you ish see it all; now I wants you to go mit me this evening to the house of Mishter Melville, and I vill tell him I must come down, dat ish vat you call him, mit my notes for all he is wort; if he don't make t'e girl marry my nice young man, Marmaduke."

"Yes, and the girl will consent to save her father."

"Dat ish so."

"But may she not pay off the mortgages, if she does not like this Marmaduke?"

"She ish not got t'e monish; yet, only when she ish eighteen years of age."

"Ah! and she is how old now?"

"It will be four mont's before she ish of age, shudge."

"You hold the trump card, Moses; now how can I give you my valuable services?"

"Vell, you ish draw up all t'e legal papers vat I want."

"So I can; but your friend you spoke of having a letter from?"

"Ah yes, shudge; he ish annudder nice young man, he ish somebody, and he vas put in prison for to be tried for murder; but he kills t'e jailer and gets away mit himself, and so he don't vas pe hooing."

"Vell, he vas an old frint of mine; I lend him monish many times, and he writes me word that he comes back now mit disguise to get some papers from his uncle; he wants me to buy an old gold mine his uncle have got out West, and if he von't sell it, he vill get it anyhow."

"Another bold stroke wanted, I see











